



Leading the Way: Evergreen Park's Lead Service Line Communication Strategy

Transparent, sustained, and consistent communications are vital to building and maintaining community participation for lead service line replacement.

The south suburban Village of Evergreen Park, Illinois, has approximately 7,000 water service connections, supplying drinking water to nearly 20,000 individuals. Greater than 90% of Evergreen Park's drinking water service lines are assumed to be made from lead and need to be replaced to meet state and federal requirements.

Elevate partnered with the Village to implement recommendations from our research on effective LSLR communication. The full set of recommendations is available in our report, [Tapping into Success: Strategies for Effective Lead Service Line Replacement Communications](#).

Developing a Plan for Resident Communications

Lead service line replacement differs from other public works projects in important ways. One big difference is that a significant portion of the work takes place on private property as opposed to only in the public right-of-way. Accordingly, more touchpoints with property owners are needed, and community members must be educated on what to expect and kept up to date on progress.

One of the recommendations we heard repeatedly in researching our Tapping into Success report is the need to diversify communications. Knocking on doors can be effective, but not everyone will

be home when you visit. Municipal websites are an easy way to share information, but some may not look there. E-newsletters are a quick way to reach a lot of people, but most utilities have less than 100% of residents' email addresses.

Sharing information in a variety of formats and over a sustained period is critical to getting the message out. Elevate worked with Mayor Kelly Burke and Village staff to develop communications materials, including a tri-fold brochure, a [municipal webpage](#), and content for the Village's e-newsletter. We also worked with the Village on an outreach strategy to use these materials effectively, and we learned important lessons along the way.

Takeaways from Evergreen Park

Evergreen Park applied for and secured a loan from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency to replace 900 lead service lines from 2024 to 2026. When we wrapped up our project with them, they had enough signed participation forms for the first year of funding and were preparing to go out to bid.

Elevate is grateful to the officials and staff of Evergreen Park for letting us learn alongside them as they embark on the process of replacing lead service lines. Key considerations and lessons learned from the project include the following.

Takeaways from Evergreen Park (Continued)

Trustworthiness: Evergreen Park found a trusted messenger in Mayor Burke who spoke openly and honestly at community meetings. In the early stages of the program, she proved to be the ideal spokesperson—delivering a message that resonated with residents and fostering both cooperation and strong participation.

Clear Language: Evergreen Park aimed to find the right balance of information in consideration of their audience. They removed jargon and acronyms, and Elevate worked with them to find the right level of detail to explain complex concepts in a way that anyone can understand.

Transparency: In their communications, Evergreen Park was open and honest about how they were prioritizing replacements, using a block-by-block approach for economic and operational efficiency as well to limit disruptions. Additionally, they highlighted the steps they take on a daily basis to keep the community's drinking water safe.

Incentivizing Participation: In recognition of the financial burden this work may impose on households, Evergreen Park is covering roughly 80% of the overall cost of replacement and will offer no-interest loans to assist homeowners with the remaining expense.

Consistency: Whether people are reading the website, discussing the project with municipal staff, or listening to the mayor at a public meeting, all communications used consistent messaging to answer basic questions regarding timeline, expected costs, and other elements of the program.

Want to Learn More?

For free-to-use communications templates based on this project, visit [CookCountyTAP.org](https://www.cookcountytap.org).

Elevate wishes to thank the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and The Joyce Foundation for their ongoing support of projects related to, research into, and collaborations to address lead in water.